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Pre-Wrath Rapture

We're discussing eschatology and in particular the issue of the timing of the rapture. I'm using two terms here. Rapture and return to distinguish between Christ coming for His Church in the air and taking them to heaven vs Christ's coming with His Church to earth to establish the kingdom. Technically it's not proper to use the term "return" that way because the "return" is used for the whole complex of judgments that are coming. But I need some terms to use to distinguish the different views so I've chosen to use the words rapture and return. By rapture I mean the blessed hope, I mean Christ coming *for* His Church in the air, resurrecting them, taking them to the judgment seat and to the Father's house. By return I'm talking about devastation, about Jesus coming *with* His Church in judgment to the earth where He will subsequently set up His kingdom. So that's what I mean when I use those vocabulary words. But realize the NT uses the return terminology to refer to the entire complex of events leading up to the day He physically returns to earth. So my use of return is narrower than the Scriptural use.

At this point we're only dealing with futurism, the other two views are preterism, past and historicism which is present. Our main interests now are the futuristic views. There are four of them; post-tribulationism, pre-wrath, mid-tribulationism and pre-tribulationism. Last time we dealt with post-tribulationism. The picture there is the Church and Israel are the same, there are only one people of God, so there can't be a Church-Israel distinction, therefore there can't be a rapture-return distinction. It looks like this- the Church goes into the 70th week of Daniel and on the day of Christ's return, as He's coming down the Church is raptured to meet Him in the air while He judges His enemies on earth and we immediately return with Him to the earth. So we go up and down real fast, so fast it will make your head spin because this all happens in the twinkling of an eye. That's post-

tribulationism, the rapture and return happen together. The strategy of these people has to be proving that rapture and return passages are not significantly distinct to merit separating them into totally separate events; that they're linked into one event. The problem with that is that John 14, 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15, all rapture passages differ significantly from Matt 24 and Rev 19, all return passages. Yes there are similarities but as long as you can find differences you can make the argument that they are not linked into one event but are two events. We went through some passages and built a chart pointing out some of the differences.

For example, post-tribulationism goes to the Olivet Discourse which is largely a return passage and they point to the section where it says, two women will be grinding at the mill, one will be taken, one will be left and they say, see, here's a return passage and the rapture is lumped right in there with the return. What did we say is the problem with that? Contextually what is he likening this analogy to? The Flood. And who were the one's taken at the Flood? Believers or unbelievers? Unbelievers, the Flood came and took them all away. So who is the woman taken from the mill? Where is she taken? She's not taken in rapture, she's taken in judgment just like the unbelievers at the Flood. So it doesn't fit the analogy Jesus is making.

Besides, you can't get the Church anywhere in Matt 24-25. Why not? Because the Church hadn't started yet. It didn't start till Acts 2. What's the big deal about Acts 2? I keep making a big deal out of the Church starting in Acts 2. Why couldn't the Church have started until Acts 2? Because the Church could not begin until the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension of Christ had already taken place. Jesus Christ had to be risen and ascended before the Church could begin. Why? Because Jesus Christ is the one who poured forth the Spirit to do His baptizing ministry. And that's the ministry that distinguishes Church saints. The baptism of the Holy Spirit places believers in Christ. And the Spirit did not exercise that ministry until the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. Another reason is because Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Church. The cornerstone has to be laid before any other stones can be laid. You can't build the Church before the cornerstone is laid. So at the death and resurrection the cornerstone is laid, then we can talk about the foundation, the apostles and prophets and then we can talk about the building. So you're back at Acts 2 again. There are a hundred reasons the

Church can't begin until Acts 2. That's why we are so insistent on that day as the origin of the Church. Nobody was in position to pour forth the Spirit and baptize people into His body until Acts 2. Nobody in the whole Bible is ever said to be baptized into the body of Christ until Acts 2. Nobody. So you can't come along like many theologians do today, 2,000 years later and start ramming and cramming the Church back into Matt 24-25. That's all before Acts 2. Matt 24-25 are all about Israel and the nations. It's an amplification of what the OT already taught about the time of horror coming upon the world for whom? Israel and the nations. That's Deut 4, that's Deut 30, that's old hat, nothing new there. Has nothing to do with the Church. So when you read Matt 24-25 don't think Church, think Israel, Israel, Israel, think the nations and how they treated Israel. The horrors of the tribulation relate to them, not to us.

Then we said a second problem with post-tribulationism is that if the rapture and the return are combined, look at the problem that you have. If the Church is here on earth and Christ is returning to earth, we're caught up to meet Him in the air and we're all transformed into resurrection bodies, all unbelievers are annihilated, who then is left to populate the earth in the millennial kingdom? Nobody. Oh yeah, it sounds really good at first, just lump the rapture and return passages all together in the same picture, until suddenly you start thinking it through and you have all these problems. It's not a coherent view of these passages. And our God is a coherent God. So here post-tribulationism has the problem of getting the population going again in the kingdom because there's nobody left in natural bodies to procreate. So they've come up with a number of proposals. Maybe it's the 144,000 becoming believers immediately after the rapture but before Christ gets back to earth. Problem: They're all males. Where are the girls; you can't make babies without girls unless you're hermaphroditic and I haven't met any human hermaphrodites. We could review other solutions they've proposed but none of them are satisfactory once you get into the text. I don't think they've ever solved that problem.

The third problem with it is that the Church is said to be delivered from the wrath to come but if the Tribulation is the wrath to come and the Church is on earth during that whole time how are they delivered from the wrath to come? So now post-tribulationism has to come up with a gimmick solution, and the gimmick is that somehow God is going to protect the Church like He

protected the Jews during the Exodus. That's one way and they have other ideas. The problem with that is if you read Exodus, when the Jews were protected, how were they protected from the judgments on Egypt? Geographically. They were in a place where there were no judgments, the land of Goshen. So none of them were harmed at all because no judgment fell on that geographical region. But in the Book of Revelation do you find geographical areas protected? No, these are global judgments, so if the Church is on the globe they're exposed to the judgments. And sure enough, we find many of them are martyred in the judgments.

Some post-tribulationists say yeah, I know, that doesn't really work so we'll try something else. I want to discuss this because the technique is going to get carried over into the pre-wrath view which we'll look at next. One technique is to just move all the wrath of God to the narrow, 24 hour day of His return, that way the entire Tribulation period leading up to that is not the wrath of God, it's just the wrath of man or Satan or the Antichrist. And this little device was taken over by Van Kampen who originated the pre-wrath view, but instead of slamming the wrath of God all the way to the last day of the tribulation he put it $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through and it goes on for a year or two. But he got the idea of re-defining the wrath of God from post-tribulationism and so one way to keep the Church out of the wrath of God is to re-define when it begins, that way you can say stuff like the four horsemen are not the wrath of God, it's just stuff going on here that is the wrath of man and Satan but not God, so then if the Church faces that wrath it's protected from the wrath of God because it doesn't start up till later. So the device here used by both groups is to start changing the timing of the wrath. That way the Church does face the wrath of man and of Satan but is protected from the wrath of God. And the rapture will occur right before the wrath of God. In post-tribulationism that's the last day of the tribulation, in pre-wrath it's about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the tribulation. But the game is the same, redefine the beginning of the wrath of God and have the rapture occur just before.

The reason all this has to happen is... it's not that people are trying to be cute here, believers are trying to sort this stuff out and as I prefaced this whole thing 5 or 6 weeks ago, you've got to understand and be patient that at this point in church history this is the period when the Holy Spirit is working all these eschatology things out, and just like it took the Reformation a couple of

centuries to get the gospel clear, it took the Church in the Middle Ages a couple of centuries to argue about what Jesus really did on the cross, it took the Church centuries to discern who is Jesus, is He God, is He man, is He both, if He's both do they get mixed, etc. It takes time to sort through this but I believe as the Church Age goes on there's a pedagogical lesson plan that the Holy Spirit is executing. So you stick with it, that's why the prayers for the maturation of the body of Christ, if you look at all the prayers in the NT praying for maturity, it centers on understanding God's revelation, on knowledge, on *epignosis*. Over and over it's prayers that you might know the depths of something, namely the Lord's ways because knowing the Lord's ways is how you come to know the Lord.

And the Church is maturing down through the corridors of Church History until it reaches the full stature of Jesus Christ, and apparently it hasn't reached that stature yet. When the last member of the Church comes in, boom, the Church is gone, it's complete, we're out of here, Israel and the nations are back on center stage. But right now the Church is on center stage.

A final point we made about the post-tribulationist, if he has the Church going into the tribulation, he confines the wrath of God to the very last day, and we're taken up to be protected from that, only to come right back down, is when do you have time for the judgment seat of Christ? When do you have time for the marriage of the Lamb? These things require some time. And you sure have to have a lot of stuff going on in a few milliseconds if you put them between the rapture and the return which I don't see how you can avoid. So those are the weaknesses of post-tribulationism; and fundamentally where it's flawed, just to remind you so you don't lose the forest for the trees, is it confuses the Church and Israel, it puts them both in the 70th week of Daniel whereas it was only Israel that was in the first 69 weeks of Daniel. So now all of a sudden you're injecting this foreign body into Israel's program, that's the big issue structurally speaking.

Now we come to pre-wrath view. This has been gaining steam since the 1990's when Van Kampen, the mutual fund guy, wrote a book called *The Sign*. His view was popularized by Rosenthal. It's called the pre-wrath rapture of the Church but if you study all the views they all hold to a pre-wrath rapture. So the view doesn't really capture the issue. The issue is not

pre-wrath but when does the wrath of God begin. That's the real issue. Post-tribbers put it all on the last day, so the rapture is pre-wrath in the sense that we're removed from the wrath of God. Pre-wrath people put it in the last $\frac{1}{4}$ of the tribulation and we're removed before that. So they're pre-wrath. Mid-tribbers see it beginning at the middle of the tribulation, we're raptured then, so they're pre-wrath. Pre-tribbers see wrath beginning at the beginning of the tribulation, the rapture is before that, so they're pre-wrath. Everyone is realizing something here, the rapture must be pre-wrath. But the argument is over when the wrath begins.

To understand the pre-wrath view we want to see when they see the wrath beginning. Rosenthal states, "If expositors get the starting point of the Day of the Lord right, the timing of the rapture becomes clear...the Rapture *will occur* before the Day of the Lord..." that's when the wrath begins, when the day of the Lord begins. "But the Day of the Lord does *not* begin when the Tribulation period begins—it begins with the opening of the seventh seal of Revelation 8:1"

He's got the 70th week of Daniel, it's a period of seven years, that's fine. But notice there are several interesting modifications here to what has traditionally been taught among pre-tribulationists. One is that he breaks the 70th week of Daniel into three parts instead of two. The traditional way is that you have the 70th week beginning with a 7 year treaty made between Antichrist and the leadership of Israel and then at the mid-point, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years into the treaty Antichrist breaks the treaty by committing the abomination of desolation in the Temple, the last 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years are known as the Great Tribulation. So the 70th week of Daniel, traditionally, is broken into two halves of 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years each. And when you read Daniel and Revelation this two-fold division is reflected in the numbers, each segment is referred to as 1,260 days, as 42 months and as a time, times and half a time, those are all segments of 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years. You never see three segments of time.

But look at what Rosenthal does, he divides the Tribulation into three parts; the beginning of sorrows, that's the first 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years, that's okay, but the second half is divided in half again, so we have three divisions instead of two. Now logically speaking this is better than the post-tribulation view. Why do we say that? Because it distinguishes the rapture and the return as two events. It doesn't link them together at the end; it pulls them apart and says

that the rapture happens right here, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through, at the seventh trumpet.

So if this is the pre-wrath view then when does Rosenthal say the wrath of God begins? It must begin right there with the seventh trumpet, that's where they say the day of the Lord begins. So the rapture of the Church is pushed way far into the 70th week of Daniel. So all this period leading up to that, what they call "the beginning of sorrows" and "the great tribulation," is not the wrath of God. The wrath of God starts right there with the seventh trumpet. And so if nothing up to that moment is the wrath of God then it must be something else. What is it if it's not the wrath of God? Oh, that's just the wrath of man, men are doing all these things and so as we go through this view and the others the thing you are looking for is where does the day of the Lord begin? Because wherever that begins that's where the wrath of God begins and the Church can't be in that. Everybody agrees to that

Now let's analyze this starting with this tri-fold division of the 70th week of Daniel. This is a unique view of the Book of Revelation. Personally I don't know of anyone else who has done this. Turn to Rev 6:12, this is the sixth seal and it's connected with the wrath of God because verse 17 connects it. If you look in verse 1 you begin to have the Lamb breaking the seven seals and it goes on through the four horsemen, it goes through the fifth seal and in verse 12 he gets to the sixth seal. Their point is that in their view the sixth seal doesn't occur until way down here about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through Daniel's 70th week. So let's read it, verse 12 "I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; ¹³and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. ¹⁴The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." We're talking big time cosmic disturbances at this point. "Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" This they say, verse 17, is a prophecy, everything up to this point is just the wrath of man, seals one through six are not the wrath of God. But verse 17

they say is predicting that what's next is the wrath of God. So this is the dividing point in their scheme between the wrath of man and the wrath of God. It hasn't come yet they say, but it's coming next, Rev 6:17.

By the way, as a side point, maybe you've detected this already, but here's something that will come back to haunt this position. Think about it, if the rapture occurs after seal six, after what we just read, way down here at seal seven because seal six is interpreted as a precursor to the wrath of God. So then all these judgments, all these cosmic catastrophes of seal six, are they before or after the rapture? They're before. Well what's the problem with that? Then they become signs, they precede the rapture. And these are big signs, seal six, with all due respect, won't be missed by anyone, every mountain and island are moved, it's a global, catastrophic disturbance. So now you have signs before the rapture. What does that do to the rapture? It makes it non-imminent. I've used that word before. What does that mean? It can happen at any moment. But if it's not imminent then it cannot happen at any moment. And if seals one through six have to happen before the rapture it's not imminent. It cannot occur until these six seals occur. So we ought to be looking for these seal judgments, then we'll know we're near the rapture. And they state this, Jeremy Thomas isn't stating this, this is what they say, they claim not to believe in imminence.

Now what they're doing here, slamming the wrath of God down here is a problem, and I want to try and show you the problem. Their argument is that the wrath of God must only be supernatural wrath, it can't involve things like human armies, famines and such, if it just involves those things then it's not the wrath of God, it's the wrath of man. And they're point is that verse 17 is a prophetic statement that the very next thing that occurs is the wrath of God. Here's the problem. When you go to the OT and study the wrath it's connected with this term day of the Lord and the judgments in this day include both supernatural catastrophes and human armies. They're trying to say it cannot include human armies and if it does it's just man's wrath. But Scripture includes both under the wrath of God. Joel predicts the wrath of God coming with armies, Amos predicts one for Israel which was fulfilled by the Assyrian invasion, Zephaniah predicts one for Judah which was fulfilled by the Babylonian invasion. These are past days of the Lord.

Turn to one, Zeph 1:7. Here is the description of a day of the Lord. And here's the thing. Shouldn't we let the past days of the Lord sketch the structure of the future day of the Lord? Didn't these past days of the Lord occur to give us a foretaste of what the much greater future day of the Lord would entail? This is where we get the model for what to expect in the future day of the Lord. So does the model include purely divine catastrophe or is it a mixture of divine catastrophe and human armies? Notice verse 7, "Be silent before the Lord GOD!" Actually that says shut up in the Hebrew, it's more of a brace yourself because of what he's about to announce. "For the day of the LORD is near, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests." There's a sacrifice, God has a sacrifice and He's invited some guests. If you analyze this, the sacrifice is Judah and the guests are the Babylonians, the Babylonians are going to eat the Judeans for breakfast. Let's see how he describes it. Verse 8, "Then it will come about on the day of the LORD'S sacrifice That I will punish the princes, the king's sons And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments. ⁹"And I will punish on that day all who leap on the *temple* threshold, Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit. ¹⁰"On that day," declares the LORD, "There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate, A wail from the Second Quarter, And a loud crash from the hills." That just happens to be the exact route the Babylonian army took when they invaded Jerusalem, they went in through the Fish Gate, they proceeded to the Second Quarter, there were sounds of the re-enforcements coming from the hills. And yet all this is described in verse 7 as the day of the Lord and yet God is using human armies.

So it becomes very difficult to say that the future day of the Lord doesn't begin when human armies are involved because in all the precursors of the day of the Lord God did use human armies. The whole theology of the OT tells you that the wrath of God has both direct supernatural catastrophic elements and human armies, many have natural elements, earthquakes, locusts. Both man and nature; remember back at creation; there are three categories, God, man and nature. And God is the God of both man and nature. So when God gets mad, guess what tools He can use? He can use people or He can use nature; it all goes back to creation. And it's reiterated throughout the OT.

My point is that in the pre-wrath tri-fold division of the Tribulation you've got to confine the wrath of God to that last period, you can't have any of it in

period one or period two. So what are the judgments that occur in periods one and two? Pre-wrath people say that's just human wrath, by which they mean to exclude it from the day of the Lord.

But what problem have we seen with that? All the examples of day of the Lord judgments in the OT involve human armies, they involve nature cataclysms. So how are you excluding them now? That doesn't fit the model. That doesn't follow precedent. So that's a problem with the pre-wrath view.

But they have to say this. Why do they have to say this? Because they want the rapture between period two and period three. Because if this is God's wrath in periods one and two then they've got to put the rapture earlier and then they're pre-tribulationist and they don't want that. I'm not sure why they don't want that, if it is based on exegesis it's pretty sorry exegesis. I was told and this is hearsay, but I was told that Van Kampen came out with this and funded Rosenthal to popularize it. Rosenthal was a pre-tribulationist for 30 years and he had the credentials. He still puts out a monthly newsletter and as far as quality of publication is concerned it's the highest quality newsletter I get. It's more like a small magazine, but anyway, this view is out there now. So for whatever reason they want the rapture down here, so the wrath of God must be confined to the last $\frac{1}{4}$ of the 70th week of Daniel. But that's problematic on the basis of the OT model of the day of the Lord it should be included.

Here's another problem, notice the Great Tribulation is compacted, part two of their three-fold division is smaller than traditionally thought of. Usually it's 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years. And can the Great Tribulation have any wrath of God in it? No, not in this scheme. So the Great Tribulation which Jesus says in Matthew is the most unparalleled destruction of all history is not the wrath of God somehow. That's a problem. So they shorten the Great Tribulation down in their scheme. I don't know, maybe a 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 years. Yet all the indications in Scripture are that the Great Tribulation is 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years. There are only two divisions in Daniels' 70th week and they are equal divisions, over and over you read 42 months, time, times and half a time, 1,260 days, you never read of any shorter period, any division within a division, it's only two divisions. So how do they justify making the Great Tribulation shorter than 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years? Turn to Matt 24:22. This verse has been used to justify a lot of baloney; it's just used very strangely by some folks. What does Jesus say? "And unless

those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” The pre-wrath school says that what this means is that the Great Tribulation will not be 3 ½ years, it’s cut short, 42 months won’t be 42 months even though it is designated as 42 months. So that’s how they get it compressed into that 1 ½ or so.

The third problem is this first period, “the beginning of sorrows,” they have lasting only 3 ½ years. It may not be obvious at first why that’s too short for this term because they’ve used the expression “beginning of sorrows,” but typically it’s referred to as the beginning of birth pangs and that’s more to the point, it comes from Matt 24:8, “all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs,” it’s in the OT too. But the problem is that birth pangs are a metaphor. Birth pangs, just speaking from pregnancy, birth pangs don’t stop until what? Until a baby is born. Until that happens the birth pangs only intensify and get worse and worse. When you bring that analogy over to Scripture it means that the horrific judgments the world faces don’t stop until what is born? Until the kingdom is born. But now you see the problem. If the birth pangs stop at the mid-point in the pre-wrath view, where’s the kingdom? It’s not for another 3 ½ years. But that doesn’t fit the analogy of birth pangs. See how that’s a problem? For the metaphor to work the birth pangs have to last the full seven years and have the kingdom immediately following. But they’ve got a gap, the birth pangs stop and the kingdom isn’t born until 3 ½ years later. That’s like a woman having birth pangs, they stop and 4 hours later a baby pops out pain free. That’s a problem and with that we’ve outlined the position pretty thoroughly.

But here’s a bigger idea I think that is bypassed in the discussion. What about the 70th week of Daniel? If they’ve got the Church during the first part and the second part but not the third part, they may have avoided the wrath of God as they’ve re-defined it, but what have they not avoided? The 70th week of Daniel. How are you bringing the Church into the 70th week of Daniel when you left it out of the first 69 weeks of Daniel? There was no church in 444BC when this whole calendar got started for the Jews. So how do you justify bringing the Church in when exegetically Dan 9 is quite clear that the 70 weeks are decreed for who? For Daniel’s people, the Jews, and Daniel’s city, Jerusalem, not the Church. Where do you get the Church in Daniel’s people? Especially when the pre-wrath people typically see the Church as

distinct from Israel. So they really have no excuse bringing the Church into the 70th week but leaving them out of the first 69.

Let's go over to Rev 5. Can the wrath really be scrunched down to the last ¼ of the 70th week? Chapter 5 introduces the seals because what has to happen before you get the seals in chapter 6? Someone has to start peeling open the seals. They don't just happen; someone has to break the seals. That's Rev 4-5. These chapters are a search for someone worthy to break the seals. There's this big search going on, notice how chapter 5 begins, "And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?' 3And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look into it." This is God the Father, holding up this thing and it's got seven seals on it and He says Who has the authority to open this up? Anyone? You know, they had title deeds in the OT and the only one who had the authority to open that thing up was the one whose title deed it was. If someone else got into it they could tamper with the contents, so there were these seals that had to remain intact. The question at this stage of history is, who has authority to open this scroll? This is something like a title deed to the earth with the acquisition details inscribed, the step by step measures listed to evict the usurpers of the earth, the seals, the trumpets and the bowls. That's the picture here in heaven; God holds this thing up and He says who's got authority to take over the earth? Angels don't, men don't, so John starts weeping because he realizes if nobody can open this then that's the end of history. Verse 4, "And I began to weep greatly, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look into it, 5and one of the elders said to me, 'Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals. 6And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth." So here comes one - He's a Lion, He's also a Lamb. Look at all the imagery! The Lamb is the imagery of sacrifice but the Lion is the imagery of victory and power. What's this all about? The Lord Jesus Christ has been crucified and raised, now He has the authority. Verse 8, "And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the

saints. 9And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy art You to take the book, and to break its seals; for You were slain and didst purchase for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10And you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'" There are textual issues there but it goes on. In verse 12, the angels, it talks about an innumerable company, there are millions and millions of these angels, all around us, out into the depths of the universe. The angels in verse 12, "saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." So now the angels join in this choir and they say, before you know it the whole creation joins in and they say, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'" When they say that, "dominion forever and ever," that's the signal. Because that's what the seals are about. Jesus Christ will now come to assert His dominion and to re-take what is rightly His, the earth.

So in Rev 6:1 "I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, 'Come.'" So there begins judgment. So how you can say the first six seals are man's wrath and God's doesn't start until the seventh? I don't know. It appears they are all caused by the Lord Jesus Christ because he's the only one who can break the seal. He breaks seal one, seal two, seal three, seal four, seal five, boom, boom, boom, judgments happen. Nothing in seals one through six occurs unless the Lord Jesus Christ breaks the seals. So are seals one through six just the wrath of men? Or is this the wrath of the Lamb? It's the wrath of the Lamb.

So the criticism is that it is highly arbitrary to separate the first six seals and say they're just the wrath of man; moreover, to conclude, at the end when we say, verse 17, when these unbelievers say the "wrath of God has come," it's an aorist verb in the Greek. The aorist doesn't usually take on a future tense like the pre-wrath people say, it's usually a past tense, a past completed action looking at the sixth seal as the wrath of God. That's what these unbelievers on earth have concluded. And if you read that sixth seal, yeah, you should conclude the same thing they conclude, man couldn't do this, only God could do this. So it's already come and yet in the pre-wrath view the Church is still on earth waiting around for the rapture that's about to happen, after these things which all become signs.

Here's another weird thing about this view, since the 'wrath of God' is mentioned in Revelation 6:17 in connection with the sixth seal judgment, that seal must be pushed forward into the second half of Daniel's 70th week, when customarily, the sixth seal has been understood to occur at least by the midpoint of the 70th week, if not earlier. As Robert Dean notes, "...chapter six gives an overview of the six seal judgments on the earth. Chapter 7 then depicts God's work of redemption within the same period of time. This would also fit with the description of the 144,000 as the first fruits. Chapters eight through nine then describe the six trumpet judgment that end in the middle of the tribulation. The interlude of chapters ten-thirteen looks at three other events which have been taking place during the first half and brings us up to date with them." But in the pre-wrath idea the sixth seal is pushed way down into the second half of the 70th week. As Charles Clough says, "By pushing that seal forward in the 70th week, little time remains for the seventh seal, the seven trumpet judgments and the seven bowl or vial judgments." See you've got to cram all the trumpets and all the bowls into that last quarter, by doing that there's not enough time to get all of it done before the end of the 70th week. So part of their position is they've got to spill those over into the 75-day period after Christ returns when He's trying to clean up and get things ready for the Millennium, and that's kind of incongruous.

That's an overview of several problems. I know this may frustrate some of you who aren't acquainted with prophecy and don't worry about all these details. If that's where you're at right now this presumes quite a bit of knowledge of the Scriptures, but if you don't get anything out of this discussion, at least get this out of it - that when you change an interpretation of a verse over here, you have to change other things. There's a linkage to the text and you can't just say I want to interpret this verse this way. If you do that you have repercussions across the board. We're dealing with an integrated system here. That's why you want to be careful and think through these things.

But don't get discouraged going through all this. I know some of you are saying, just tell me the true view and leave it at that. Well, God has a reason for the Church going through all this and trying to work this all out, just like He had a purpose for the Church going through all sorts of arguments about Christology, the Trinity, the substitutionary blood atonement. You have to go

through this and say, hmm, is this a good harmonization of the text or not? He wants us to work through this so we conform to His mind and we say, no, that's not the mind of Christ, hmm, that's not the mind of Christ either, okay, that, that is the mind of Christ and then we know Him more clearly because you know Him by His doings, future doings yes, but doings nonetheless, all His doings shape your view of God. And it's important to see what shape of God is coming out of these different views so we make sure we have the right God.

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